

# BANDE MATARAM

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BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI

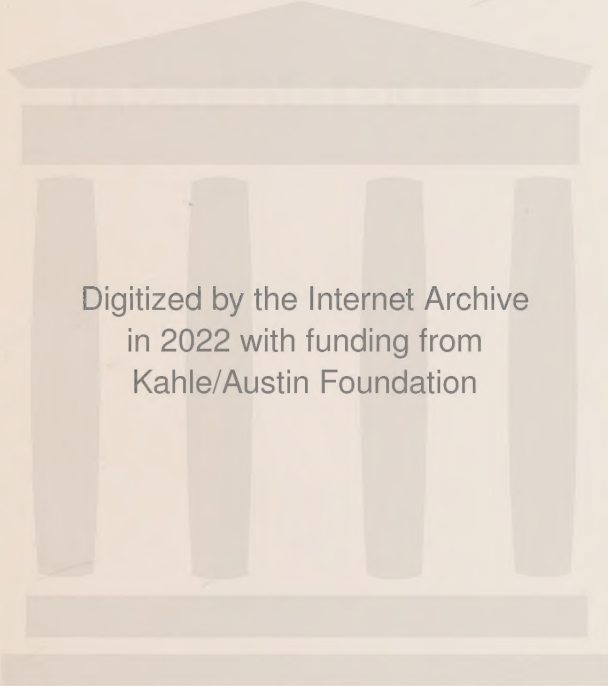


Translation and introduction  
by  
SRI AUROBINDO









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BANDE MATARAM





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BAUDE

MATARAM

THE KARMAYOGIN



These texts and translations were first published in the *Indu Prakash* (1894),  
the *Bande Mataram* (1907) and the *Karmayogin* (1909).

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## VANDE MATARAM SERIES

### Volume 1

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*This book is the first title in a series called "Vande Mataram" which has as its goal to make known a number of texts inspired by a similar vision of a new India. For, as Sri Aurobindo saw, "India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples..." He further said, "India is the guru of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies; she is destined once more to new-mould the life of the world and restore the peace of the human spirit." Thus, "the sun of India's destiny would rise and fill all India with its light and overflow India and overflow Asia and overflow the world..."*





## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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*The following text — an extract from Rishi Bankim Chandra — and the translations of the Bande Mataram were written by Sri Aurobindo between 1894 and 1909, that is during the period between his return from England and his arrival in Pondicherry, when he was intensely involved in political and revolutionary activities. Even if the political situation in India is very different today, these texts remain a powerful source of inspiration for all those who are not indifferent to the destiny of this country.*



## INTRODUCTION

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There are many who, lamenting the by-gone glories of this great and ancient nation, speak as if the Rishis of old, the inspired creators of thought and civilisation, were a miracle of our heroic age, not to be repeated among degenerate men and in our distressful present. This is an error and thrice an error. Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be overclouded but never, even for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint, are the natural fruits of our Indian

soil; and there has been no age in which they have not been born. Among the Rishis of the later age we have at last realised that we must include the name of the man who gave us the reviving Mantra which is creating a new India, the Mantra *Bande Mataram*.

The Rishi is different from the saint. His life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness nor his character by an ideal beauty. He is not great by what he was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity, and God has chosen this mouth on which to shape the words of the message. A momentous vision had to be revealed; and it is his eyes which the Almighty first unseals. The message which he has received, the vision which has been



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vouchsafed to him, he declares to the world with all the strength that is in him, and in one supreme moment of inspiration expresses it in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost natures, clarify their minds, seize their hearts and impel them to things which would have been impossible to them in their ordinary moments. Those words are the Mantra which he was born to reveal and of that Mantra he is the seer.

What is it for which we worship the name of Bankim today? What was his message to us or what the vision which he saw and has helped us to see? He was a great poet, a master of beautiful language and a creator of fair and gracious dream-figures in the world of imagination; but it is not as a poet, stylist or novelist that Bengal does honour to him today.

It is probable that the literary critic of the future will reckon *Kapalkundala*, *Bishabriksha* and *Krishnakanter Will* as his artistic masterpieces, and speak with qualified praise of *Devi Chaudhurani*, *Ananda Math*, *Krishnacharit* or *Dharmatattwa*. Yet it is the Bankim of these latter works and not the Bankim of the great creative masterpieces who will rank among the Makers of Modern India. The earlier Bankim was only a poet and stylist — the later Bankim was a seer and nation-builder.

But even as a poet and stylist Bankim did a work of supreme national importance, not for the whole of India, or only indirectly for the whole of India, but for Bengal which was destined to lead India and be in the vanguard of national development. No nation can grow without finding a fit and satisfying medium of

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expression for the new self into which it is developing — without a language which shall give permanent shape to its thoughts and feelings and carry every new impulse swiftly and triumphantly into the consciousness of all. It was Bankim's first great service to India that he gave the race which stood in its vanguard such a perfect and satisfying medium. He was blamed for corrupting the purity of the Bengali tongue; but the pure Bengali of the old poets could have expressed nothing but a conservative and unprogressing Bengal. The race was expanding and changing, and it needed a means of expression capable of change and expansion. He was blamed also for replacing the high literary Bengali of the Pundits by a mixed popular tongue which was neither the learned language nor good vernacular. But the

Bengali of the Pundits would have crushed the growing richness, variety and versality of the Bengali genius under its stiff inflexible ponderousness. We needed a tongue for other purposes than dignified treatises and erudite lucubrations. We needed a language which should combine the strength, dignity or soft beauty of Sanskrit with the nerve and vigour of the vernacular, capable at one end of the utmost vernacular raciness and at the other of the most sonorous gravity. Bankim divined our need and was inspired to meet it, — he gave us a means by which the soul of Bengal could express itself to itself.

As he had divined the linguistic need of his country's future, so he divined also its political need. He, first of our great publicists, understood the hollowness and inutility of the

method of political agitation which prevailed in his time and exposed it with merciless satire in his *Lokarahasya* and *Kamalakanter Daptar*. But he was not satisfied merely with destructive criticism, — he had a positive vision of what was needed for the salvation of the country. He saw that the force from above must be met by a mightier reacting force from below, — the strength of repression by an insurgent national strength. He bade us leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine. The Mother of his vision held trenchant steel in her twice seventy million hands and not the bowl of the mendicant. It was the gospel of fearless strength and force which he preached under a veil and in images in *Ananda Math* and *Devi Chaudhurani*. And he had an inspired unerring vision of the moral strength which

must be at the back of the outer force. He perceived that the first element of the moral strength must be *tyāga*, complete self-sacrifice for the country and complete self-devotion to the work of liberation. His workers and fighters for the motherland are political *byrāgees* who have no other thought than their duty to her and have put all else behind them as less dear and less precious and only to be resumed when their work for her is done. Whoever loves self or wife or child or goods more than his country is a poor and imperfect patriot; not by him shall the great work be accomplished. Again, he perceived that the second element of the moral strength needed must be self-discipline and organisation. This truth he expressed in the elaborate training of Devi Chaudhurani for her work, in the strict rules

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of the Association of the "Ananda Math" and in the pictures of perfect organisation which those books contain. Lastly, he perceived that the third element of moral strength must be the infusion of religious feeling into patriotic work. The religion of patriotism, — this is the master idea of Bankim's writings. It is already foreshadowed in *Devi Chaudhurani*. In *Dharmatattwa* the idea and in *Krishnacharit* the picture of a perfect and many-sided Karmayoga is sketched, the crown of which shall be work for one's country and one's kind. In *Ananda Math* this idea is the key-note of the whole book and received its perfect lyrical expression in the great song which has become the national anthem of United India. This is the second great service of Bankim to this country that he pointed out to it the way of

salvation and gave it the religion of patriotism. Of the new spirit which is leading the nation to resurgence and independence, he is the inspirer and political Guru.

The third and supreme service of Bankim to his nation was that he gave us the vision of our Mother. The bare intellectual idea of the Motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring motive. There are few Indians at present, whether loyalist, moderate or nationalist in their political views, who do not recognise that the country has claims on them or that freedom in the abstract is a desirable thing. But most of us, when it is a question between the claims of the country and other claims, do not in practice prefer the service of the country; and



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while many may have the wish to see freedom accomplished, few have the will to accomplish it. There are other things which we hold dearer and which we fear to see imperilled either in the struggle for freedom or by its accomplishment. It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born. To some men it is given to have that vision and reveal it to others. It was thirty-two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song and few

listened; but in a sudden moment of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang *Bande Mataram*. The Mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no further slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered. A great nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror.

Sri Aurobindo

(16 April, 1907)

# वन्दे मातरम्

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वन्दे मातरम् ।

सुजलां सुफलां मलयज-शीतलाम् ।

शस्य-श्यामलां मातरम् ॥

शुभ्र-ज्योत्स्ना-पुलकित-यामिनीम्

फुल्ल-कुसुमित-द्रुमदल-शोभिनीम्,

सुहासिनीं सुमधुर-भाषिणीम्,

सुखदां वरदां मातरम् ॥

सप्तकोटि-कण्ठ-कलकल-निनाद-कराले

द्विसप्तकोटि-भुजैर्धृत-खरकरवाले,

अबला केन मा एत बले !

बहुबल-धारिणीं नमामि तारिणीम्  
रिपुदल-वारिणीं मातरम् ॥

तुमि विद्या तुमि धर्म,  
तुमि हृदि तुमि मर्म,  
त्वं हि प्राणाः शरीरे ।  
बाहुते तुमि मा शक्ति,  
हृदये तुमि मा भक्ति,  
तोमारइ प्रतिमा गडि मन्दिरे ।

त्वं हि दुर्गा दशप्रहरण-धारिणी  
कमला कमल-दल-विहारिणी  
वाणी विद्यादायिनी नमामि त्वाम्  
नमामि कमलाम् अमलाम् अतुलाम्  
सुजलां सृफलां मातरम् ।  
वन्दे मातरम्,  
श्यामलां सरलां सुस्मितां भूषिताम्  
धरणीं भरणीं मातरम् ॥

## BANDE MATARAM

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Mother, I bow to thee !  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with the orchard gleams,  
Cool with thy winds of delight,  
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,  
Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams,  
Over the branches and lordly streams, —  
Clad in thy blossoming trees,  
Mother, giver of ease,

Laughing low and sweet !

Mother, I kiss thy feet,

Speaker sweet and low !

Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,

When the swords flash out in twice

seventy million hands

And seventy million voices roar

Thy dreadful name from shore to shore ?

With many strengths who art mighty

and stored,

To thee I call, Mother and Lord !

Thou who savest, arise and save !

To her I cry who ever her foemen drave

Back from plain and sea

And shook herself free.

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Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
Thou the love divine, the awe  
In our hearts that conquers death.  
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,  
Thine the beauty, thine the charm.  
Every image made divine  
In our temples is but thine.

Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,  
With her hands that strike  
and her swords of sheen,  
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,  
And the Muse a hundred-toned.  
Pure and perfect without peer,  
Mother, lend thine ear.  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,

Dark of hue, O candid-fair  
in thy soul, with jewelled hair  
And thy glorious smile divine,  
Loveliest of all earthly lands,  
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!  
Mother, mother mine!  
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,  
Mother great and free!





## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

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*It is difficult to translate the National Anthem of Bengal into verse in another language owing to its unique union of sweetness, simple directness and high poetic force. All attempts in this direction have been failures. In order, therefore, to bring the reader unacquainted with Bengali nearer to the exact force of the original, I give the translation line by line.*



## BANDE MATARAM

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I bow to thee, Mother,  
richly-watered, richly fruited,  
cool with the winds of the south,  
dark with the crops of the harvests,  
the Mother!

Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the  
moonlight,  
her lands clothed beautifully with her trees  
in flowering bloom,  
sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,  
the Mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss!

Terrible with the clamorous shout of seventy  
million throats,  
and the sharpness of swords raised in twice  
seventy million hands,  
Who sayeth to thee, Mother,  
that thou art weak ?  
Holder of multitudinous strength,  
I bow to her who saves,  
to her who drives from her the armies  
of her foemen,  
the Mother !

Thou art knowledge, thou art conduct,  
thou art heart, thou art soul,  
for thou art the life in our body.  
In the arm thou art might, O Mother,  
in the heart, O Mother, thou art love and faith,  
it is thy image we raise in every temple.

For thou art Durga holding  
her ten weapons of war,  
Kamala at play in the lotuses  
and speech, the goddess, giver of all lore,  
to thee I bow!

I bow to thee, goddess of wealth,  
pure and peerless,  
richly-watered, richly fruited,  
the Mother!

I bow to thee, Mother,  
dark-hued, candid,  
sweetly smiling, jewelled and adorned,  
the holder of wealth, the lady of plenty,  
the Mother!





## BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI (1838 - 1894)

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Bankim Chandra Chatterji was born in Kanthalapara, near Calcutta, on 26 June 1838. His father, Jadav Chandra Chatterji, a Deputy Magistrate and a man of culture, had a very strange experience when he was about 13 years old. One day, he ran away from his home to Orissa where his elder brother was then in service. There he fell seriously ill and his state became so desperate that he was soon given up for dead. When taken to the riverside to be cremated, a *sannyasi* suddenly appeared and ordered

the preparation for the cremation to be stopped. With his yogic powers, he then brought Jadav back to life. Afterwards, Jadav received sacred initiation from his rescuer. It is believed that the same *sannyasi* visited him shortly before his death. This episode is very interesting, for his son Bankim was also to be greatly influenced by *sannyasis*, as we shall see.

Bankim's education began at home under the teacher in charge of the village elementary school. He then studied at an English school of Midnapore and later at the Hooghly College, which was on the bank of the Ganga facing Kanthalpara. In 1849, in accordance with tradition, he married a girl of five.

In July 1856, Bankim entered the newly-created Calcutta Presidency College. In 1858, with Jadunath Basu, he was the first Bengali to



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take a degree of B.A. In his subsequent thirty-three years of service as Deputy Magistrate and Deputy Collector, he showed considerable ability but also a spirit of sturdy independence, his straightforwardness often bringing him into sharp conflict with the arrogance of certain Britishers.

In 1860, one year after the death of his first wife, he married Rajlakshmi Devi who, by his own admission, occupied a very important part in his life.

But Bankim Chandra Chatterji was never happy with his work, and it is in the field of literature that he was to find the fulfilment of his soul. Thanks to his years under the tutelage of British teachers, he had developed a good command of the English language. An admirer of Ishwar Chandra Gupta, Bankim Chandra had begun his literary career at the Hooghly College

as a poet but he soon gave up poetry in favour of prose. In 1864 his first novel in English, *Rajmohan's Wife*, was serialised in the journal "Indian Field".

This was to be his last work in English, for he realised that he could effectively communicate the passion burning in his heart to his countrymen only by writing in his mother tongue. This realisation was to be the starting point of a new era. Till then, to the Bengalis educated in English, it appeared impossible to remedy the inadequacy of their mother tongue to express modern ideas. Bankim recast the ancient language so that it became a vehicle fit for the clear and dynamic expression of modern literature.

His first novel in Bengali, *Durgesh Nandini*, was published in 1865. Though certain critics of the time declared that it was an imitation of

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Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, it left no doubt for keen readers that *Durgesh Nandini* had created an entirely different emotional field. As Sri Aurobindo wrote, "Scott could paint outlines, but he could not fill them in. Here Bankim excels; speech and action with him are so closely interpenetrated and suffused with a deeper existence that his characters give us the sense of real men and women".... With each of his following creative masterpieces, like *Kapala Kundala*, *Mrinalini*, *Chandrasekhar*, *Rajani*, *Krishnakanta's Will*, *The Poison Tree*, Bankim Chandra created a world of Beauty. He saw, wrote Sri Aurobindo, "what was beautiful and sweet and gracious in Hindu life, and what was lovely and noble in Hindu woman, her deep heart of emotion, her steadfastness, tenderness and loveliness, in fact, her woman's soul; and all this we find

burning in his pages and made diviner by the touch of a poet and an artist”.

As explained by Sri Aurobindo, in *Devi Chaudhurani* Bankim outlines the elements which should constitute the bedrock of a true and lasting struggle for the salvation of his country: self-sacrifice and self-devotion, self-discipline and organisation, infusion of religious feeling into patriotism.

These ideas find their full expression in *Ananda Math* in which the action takes place during the chaotic days of the 1770's when Bengal was under the dual rule of the Nawab, an Iranian, Mohammed Reza Khan, and the East India Company. Neither of them cared to maintain law and order and their servants oppressed the people who had no protection against them. This situation was aggravated by the famine of 1769-70 which was so terrible that scores of people were

forced to abandon their homes, eat roots and grass, sell their children and, sometimes, feed upon human corpses. The loss of life caused by this calamity was estimated at one-third of the population of Bengal. But the main historical fact on which *Ananda Math* is built is what has been called the *sannyasi* rebellion. This movement had been initiated, in the middle of the sixteenth century by *sannyasis* who belonged to the *dasnami*, which were monastic orders founded hundreds of years before by Shankaracharya. These *sannyasis* had as a mission to protect, by brute force if necessary, the life, properties and prerogatives of the members of their order. At the period which concerns us, their ranks swollen by starving peasants and disbanded soldiers, large bodies of *sannyasis* were extorting money from rich *zamindars*, attacking villages, sometimes British

plantations and factories, looting, pillaging and clashing with the Company's forces.\* Out of these rebels, whom the people held in high respect, Bankim made an exalted band of patriots who rose up against the oppressors by singing *Bande Mataram*, which will become, to quote one of them, the "clarion call to the field of duty", for generations of freedom fighters. And, for hundreds of unknown heroes, the ultimate cry of defiance at the time of their death at the hands of their oppressors.

By the spiritual power of its symbol, this hymn can still today be engraved in the heart of each *deshbhakta*, irrespective of his social and religious background. When in 1939 a disciple told Sri Aurobindo that some people objected to

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Muslim fakirs had also organised themselves on the pattern of the *sannyasis*. Sometimes both groups united their forces against the Company.

Bande Mataram as a national song, he replied: "But it is not a religious song: it is a national song and the Durga spoken of is India as the Mother."

In 1882, a Scottish missionary, Reverend Hastie, launched virulent and injurious attacks on the Hindu religion in the *Statesman*. Bankim, already immersed in the study of the universal truths of *Sanatan Dharma*, decided he could not let Hastie's affront go unchallenged. Under the pseudonym of Ram Chandra, he replied with vigour and clarity to the missionary's charges in the columns of the same paper through a series of remarkable letters. This was the opportunity for Bankim to publicly bring forward the fundamentals of the Hindu religion before the educated Bengalis, demonstrating how baseless and tallacious these missionary attacks were.

The artist turned more and more into a

thinker and a spiritual seeker. Suffering greatly from diabetes, he retired prematurely from service in September 1891 and became President of the Literary Section of the Society for the Higher Training of Young Men, later known as the University Institute. He devoted the last years of his life to the writing of *Dharmatattwa* and *Krishnacharit* in which he undertook to communicate the essence of the *Gita* and the *Vedas* to his countrymen.

But his work on the *Vedas* was left incomplete and never published. Death took Bankim Chandra Chatterji on 8 April 1894, at the age of fifty-six.

*The Editor*



BOOKS OF BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI  
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ANANDAMATH  
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❖

RAJMOHAN'S WIFE  
*Published by Ravi Dayal*

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*Sri Aurobindo*

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# BANDE MATARAM

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Rare are those who are capable of seeing the true reality of the being of a nation behind the veil of its physical appearances. It is Bankim Chandra Chatterji who gave the vision of Mother India to his people. In April 1907, Sri Aurobindo wrote: "It was thirty-two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song and few listened; but in a sudden moment of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang *Bande Mataram*. The Mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself ",



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